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AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE JUNIOR ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY

OF THE

CITY AND COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA,

December 23, 1836.

BY HENRY PETERSON,

A Member of the Society.

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BY HENRY PETERSON.

MR. PRESIDENT,—The subject of Slavery is one of much importance to every American. It is not only a question of great interest to the slaveholding community, but it affects the prosperity of every part of this republic. The states which compose the Federal Government are so closely knit together in the bonds of Union, that the good conduct and peculiar institutions of one exerts much influence upon the happiness of the others. I would compare them, in this respect, to a family, where the bad disposition and temper of one individual often destroys the comfort of the rest.

We are not a confederacy linked loosely by the will of state-governments; but a general government established under a Constitution formed by the collective body of the people. By that Constitution one portion of the inhabitants is secured in the possession of their inalienable rights of Life and Liberty, while another portion is debarred from the enjoyment of these natural rights, which are transferred as privileges to a favored few.

In contrasting this unequal protection of rights under the Constitution, with one of the sentiments so much admired in the Declaration of Independence, (that "title deed of our liberties," as it has been called,) that "governments are established among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed;" it must be concluded, that the portion of the community above alluded to, have either acquiesced in this transfer of right, consenting to be held as beasts of burden; or that the American people had flown in the face of their avowed belief, and being no longer in

fear for their own liberty, saw the most perfect justice in acting the tyrant towards others. I suppose that the best mode, however, to explain away any appearance of inconsistency between our profession and our practice, would be to say—That the "self-evident truths" in the Declaration of Independence were intended to apply in general, and the Constitution in particular cases. And perhaps, after all, it is not so much to be wondered at, when we remember that through this same very pardonable confusion of terms, a certain class of our citizens have long been persecuted, only to prevail upon them to leave the country of their own free will and accord.

It has been said by some, and it appears to be the settled belief of others, that however hurtful the continuance of slavery may be to the south, it has not the least bearing upon the interests of the northern and middle states. This conviction has led many to shun all inquiry into the subject. They say, It will be the same to us, whether slavery is or is not abolished; we will leave slaveholders to settle their own affairs, and "as they sow, so must they reap." But I say to *these*, to *these* who require something more than those bubbles Philanthropy and Justice to make them ardent in such a cause, that slavery does now, and will more and more affect them, even in their individual interests and privileges.

The non-slaveholding states are deprived of their just weight in the councils of the nation as regards the ratio of representation in Congress. There is also an accession of political power conferred in the choice of President and

Vice President in proportion to the number of slaves held in any state : thus encouraging, by a direct bounty, the slaveholding interest. The same power which decides that slaves may be considered "goods and chattels personal," confers upon the owners of this *peculiar species* of property, (on account, I suppose, of their devotion to the cause "for which our fathers fought and bled,") an extra representation in Congress, an extra delegation in the Electoral college. This is a direct infringement of the system of equal representation ; which, although granted, or rather submitted to, by the North at the formation of the Federal Union, is nevertheless highly aristocratic and odious in its nature.

Is it nothing to us, that when the bloodhounds of the master are upon the track of the fugitive, that *we* should be compelled to violate every dictate of honour, every principle of humanity, every precept of religion ? Is it nothing to us, that we are directly responsible for the slavery of every runaway whom we may deliver up to his legal master ? The ruthless pirate who crosses the main for the purpose of stealing his fellow man, may find ample palliation in our conduct for his own guilt. The barbarian would expect to see *him* blasted by the just vengeance of an omnipotent God, who after the stranger had supped with him and abode in his dwelling, should deliver him up to a just punishment ; but *we* will deliver up the stranger even to his bitterest enemy, to experience his justice and his condemnation. When a band of gallant Poles announced their determination to leave all the fond abodes of their childhood, rather than dwell under the dominion of a tyrant, free Europe rung with applause, and America echoed back the sound. Yet they left their birthplace, not because they would not be slaves, but because they would not be subjects. But when he, whose bosom burning with the same noble fire which Heaven has placed in the heart of every man, escaping from his master, conceals himself from the light of the glorious sun, and travels on in darkness, with the north star for his guide ; after having braved every difficulty, and surmounted every obstacle ; when it seems

that a good Providence has smiled upon his dearest hopes ; when, perhaps, settled with a family growing up around him, in the enjoyment of that which the "eternal spirit of the chainless mind" had so long and ardently desired ; *then*, in the midst of his peace, appears that dread myrmidon, who, if human punishment could atone for human guilt, deserves that like the fate of the Roman of old, the molten gold for which he has perilled his future destiny, should be poured down that throat which so often has spoken the tones of mockery and scorn to human peace ; which so often have withered in the bud the growing blossoms of the tree of life. Yet this is sanctioned by our laws. If this be nothing to us, an eternity of guilt would pass unnoticed.

There is also a very supposable case in which the bad effects of southern slavery would operate as a great drawback upon northern interests. In the event of a general insurrection among the slaves, the interference of Congress with the "peculiar institutions" of the south would be as loudly demanded, as it is now justly deprecated and condemned. Though the blacks, under present circumstances, may be despised, with a competent leader, they would make themselves dreaded. They might be conquered, but it would be at the expense of a great sacrifice of human life ; and even then, disheartened as they might be, they could not be again reduced to quiet servitude. The old order of things could never be restored. I am no apologist for insurrection. There is not an individual in this assembly who more fervently hopes that it may never be. Sooner than slavery should by this means be abolished, I would perpetuate it through all future time. Yes : much as I dislike slavery—much as I feel my country's indignity and shame—I would even see it perpetuated and branded upon the fair forehead of eternal nature, than that the fields of the south should be farther sullied with the blood of the spoiler and his helpless victim.

But, though I hold these views, am I to be blamed for proclaiming not only the possibility, but the nearly absolute certainty, that if other means fail, slavery

will finally end in insurrection and murder. None but a fool would shut his eyes because danger was around him and in his path. The solitary watch in the tempest, who would allow the sleeping crew to be dashed unconscious on the rocks, is a fit emblem of that false spirit which is now lulling this country to repose and inaction, that it may awake amid the groans of the dying, the insensibility of the dead. If such a dire catastrophe was to take place, would it have no effect upon our peace and happiness? It is not in the heart of man to conceive the result and issue of such a contest. In our war for independence we declared, "that Heaven never gave the victory against a virtuous people determined to be free;" and disguise it as we may from each other, the conviction must be established in every mind, that they would be contending for their unalienable rights.

Then is it nothing to us, that in such a case, the men and money of the non-slaveholding states would be called for; and by our solemn compact of mutual assistance have to be given;—not in a just cause, (that might be some palliation,) but for the accomplishment of an unjust and unholy end.

Does not this, in some degree at least, warrant us in using our privilege as members of the same great family; to humbly advise our brethren of the south; to conjure them by the sacred name of justice, in the simple though bold language of truth and friendship—that we may be spared that dread alternative, of either violating our principles, or breaking that compact of assistance pledged to them in the Constitution? Should not this be some excuse for our agitation of this tender subject? If we even have *no right* to interfere, should it be begrudged us as a privilege, that believing these things to be true, we should call upon them and the whole community to awake ere they sleep with the slumber of the grave? Therefore it is both a mistaken and absurd idea, that we are not interested in this peculiar institution of the south. I trust that I have shown that we are deeply interested; that we are not mere indifferent advisers, who busy ourselves with what does not con-

cern us; but that the peace and happiness of the free states—in short, the prosperity, aye, the very existence of this Union, does in a great measure depend upon the abolition of southern slavery.

There is another aspect, however, in which the influence of slavery upon our happiness, though it is not so clearly to be perceived, is yet a very manifest source of evil. I mean the acknowledged loose condition of morals in the south. The daily broils, the assassinations; committed not only without punishment, but where the murderer stalks abroad at noonday, without fear of the law. I regret to say, that this spirit is spreading, and infecting the hitherto quiet north with the pestilence of the desperado. From whence doth this proceed? The tale is soon told. Slavery is the mother of idleness. Idleness, says the old proverb, is the parent of many vices. Here, then, we have the genealogy of this immorality. We trace it back through two generations, and slavery stands convicted as the author of its being.

While I admit—as anti-slavery societies ever have admitted—that none but slaveholders have the right to interfere politically with slavery in the southern states, we cannot forget that there is one small part of our country in which we have the right to interfere for its suppression. Though our privilege even to feel an interest in the south should be doubted, it is the extreme of folly to deny the power of Congress to stamp its abhorrence of this odious system by abolishing forever both slavery and the slave-trade in the District of Columbia. It would be a needless waste of time to attempt to disprove the arguments urged against the power and authority of Congress in this particular. I shall therefore take it for granted, that *that* article in the constitution which empowers Congress "to legislate in all cases whatsoever" in the District of Columbia, means precisely what it says. If then slavery at the South, indirectly, though powerfully, affects us, and slavery in the District of Columbia and territories is dependent upon the free states for its existence, it is most certainly necessary, that this subject should be considered by us, and correct principles adopted.

Anti-Slavery societies are pursuing a similar course in relation to slavery that temperance societies have ever pursued in relation to Intemperance. Temperance societies would not have been instrumental in doing so much good, had they confined the circulation of their principles exclusively to drunkards. They knew that without they procured the support of temperate, sober men—men of principle, who were not addicted to this beastly vice, they might lecture for ever with but little avail. Such is the course now being taken by Anti-Slavery societies. The influence which their principles exert upon Slavery, is comparatively nothing to that success, which the co-operation of the mass of the community would secure. So long as our principles are opposed even in the north, by religious, moral men, we cannot hope for much good from a slaveholding population. But, if ever the sentiments held by Anti-Slavery societies become,—as the sentiments held by Temperance societies have already become—the principles of those who are free of this sin, the progress of moral light will not be retarded by Mason and Dixon's line.

If we consider the influence that slavery exerts upon the pecuniary interests of any country, we shall find that to say the least it is a great disadvantage. If we contrast the present condition of the free, with that of the slaveholding states; we shall find abundant evidence that it is a cure even to the masters themselves. And at the same time that it is turning the human mind, and energies and passions into a desert, that with retributive justice, it is blasting the fields of him, who is the author of this moral barrenness. The most obvious proof of this can be found by taking a short view of the states of Ohio and Kentucky. Occupying equal portions of Land and equally blessed with those sources of wealth that advance a young country, from one having made itself an asylum for this odious system, it has fallen far behind the other in the road to greatness; we can form some estimate of this by comparing the population of these two states at different periods. By the census of 1790, the population of Ken-

tucky numbered about 70,000; of Ohio, 3,000. In 1830, the first had increased to near 700,000; while Ohio then numbered near a million. The beneficial results of an increase of population can be easily perceived. Land in Ohio is worth much more than the same quality in Kentucky. And this cause of prosperity is still in operation. Between the years 1820 and 1830, the increase of population in Ohio was 350,000; in Kentucky during the same time only 125,000. The cause of this is soon explained. It is well known that beside the natural increase of population in the western states, great numbers of emigrants mostly from the eastern states with foreigners from Europe, settle in the west, and give a fresh impulse to already active enterprise. Now, the new slaveholding states cannot count upon aid from this source. Very few enterprising men will settle in a slave state. That this is true with respect to foreigners is proven by the different numbers of aliens in the two states before alluded to. By the last census it appears that Ohio had within her borders 5,500 aliens, while Kentucky had only 173. And while Ohio, the young Queen of the West, in all the freshness of youth and of beauty is triumphing over natural obstacles, Kentucky comparatively creeps lingering on as if stricken with the palsy of age. Then remove slavery and Kentucky might rival her sister state in prosperity. Why the difference even in the value of land, as the slaveholders are commonly large landholders, would nearly compensate for the loss of the slave. It would be unnecessary to enter into a farther comparison—to compare the largest state in the Union, Virginia, with Pennsylvania or New York. It might hurt the sensitive feelings of the "Chivalry of the south," were we too often to lift the veil, and point you to South Carolina, which like a dissolute youth is already the victim of a premature old age. The enterprising, honest poor of the white population, flying from her as they are from most of the old slave states, and leaving many of that desirable class who would starve, sooner than work, and steal much rather than starve. To show that this is not an exaggerated account I will quote a

short extract from a late speech of Senator Preston. He said, "That no southern man can travel (as he had lately done,) through the northern states, and witness the prosperity, the industry, the public spirit which they exhibit—the sedulous cultivation of all those arts by which life is rendered comfortable and respectable—without feelings of deep sadness and shame, as he remembers his own neglected and desolate home. How different the condition of these things in the south. No improvement is seen going on—nothing is done for posterity—no man thinks of anything beyond the present moment."

The primary ground which we take, and the basis of our principles, which is of such importance that if abandoned our opposition to slavery could only be founded upon pecuniary interest, is—that no man can rightfully hold property in man; that Human flesh and blood can never be justly considered, "chattels personal to all intents and purposes whatsoever." There is one species of slavery (if it can be so termed,) which doubtless is in true conformity with morality,—that is, where criminals are confined for a term of years for offences against the peace and order of society. Without this power be placed in the law, and government of a country, government nor law could not exist. But this confinement, bears little resemblance to that odious system which we are discussing. It is not even claimed that the blacks in the south have committed any offences against the peace of society which deserve so hard a fate; for in fact their slavery is tenfold worse than that of the criminal. He knows that though he should die within the walls of his prison, that his children do not inherit with their fathers' name, their fathers' crimes and punishment: but the slavery of the black man descends upon his posterity from generation to generation; as everlasting in its nature, as it is mighty in its evil.

Moral and legal right, are by some supposed to be synonymous terms, but the difference between them is oftentimes as great as the difference between truth and falsehood. Legal right is the production of erring man, and as such is fallible: but moral right is the law of his

Creator and as such is infallible and omnipotent. We admit then that the southern slaveholder has a full legal right to buy, or sell, or hold slaves, and that non-slaveholders have no right to interfere in a political manner: but we do contend, that they have no moral right to hold their fellow men in bondage, and it therefore becomes our high privilege and duty, to use all moral means to remove this foul stain upon our political and moral character. This then is the ground upon which we are willing to rest our right to agitate this subject and it must be self evident to every candid mind that we are bound by the laws of moral duty, to enforce the great truths of civil and religious liberty.

Now if the ground which I have taken be admitted, that slavery, as it exists in the southern states—which had its origin in man-stealing,—is a sin, and as it is the general belief, I shall not enter into a long argument to prove it—then it necessarily follows, that it is the duty of all holders of this legal species of property to liberate their slaves as soon as it may comport with the preservation of the peace and the general welfare of the community. We have now arrived at that point in the argument where the opponents of slavery begin to differ. They travel on very well together till they arrive here; but then, taking different roads, opposition becomes the order of the day. One party after acknowledging that it is the duty of slaveholders to liberate their slaves as soon as consistent with the public good, declare it as their firm belief, that the abolition of slavery should never take place if the blacks are allowed to remain in the country afterwards. They say, that they would as soon let loose a wild beast amidst the habitations of men, without transferring him to his native wilds, as emancipate the slaves without colonizing them in the land from which their ancestors were stolen.

The other party, doubtless, poor, simple souls, presume to think that the comparison of slaves to wild beasts is rather far fetched, and cannot comprehend the learned logic of their adversaries in stating, that the slave is so much attached to his master when deprived of that

Liberty, "which gives the flower of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;" and yet that when his master should confer that precious boon upon him, that the obedient slave in the former case, should at once become the semblance of the wild and ferocious tiger. I must beg the indulgence of this assembly while I admit that this society rather incline to this latter belief: and in truth hold it as the fundamental principle of our existence. We do most sincerely believe that the immediate and unconditional emancipation of every slave in the United States, so far from being attended with any bad consequences would not only be the most in conformity with morality, but the best mode of eradicating slavery and its kindred vices from our otherwise happy land. We can see nothing of that hideous spirit in the heart of man, that he had borne even oppression without murmuring, upon the acknowledgment of his just rights he should glory in the deeds of a demon. I am thankful that I have a higher opinion of human nature. That whatever the faults of individuals may be, I cannot believe that there is now or ever has been, that people who could thus coolly plunge the dagger in the heart, and wave the firebrand in the dwelling of their friend and benefactor. He who takes such dark views of even frail humanity, without having the least authority from history to substantiate them, deserves that his own motives and actions should be suspected. He lays himself open to the just imputation, that he has looked into his own bosom, and seen falsehood with perfidy plotting, and judges all others by the same low standard. Is there an individual in this room, who can imagine himself placed in the condition of a slave, who would not feel the warm blood rush to his forehead, at this gross imputation upon a whole people? Mankind are alike in feeling; the same passions exist in the breast of the negro, in a greater or less degree, as they do in the breast of every race which treads this habitable globe. What proof can any one bring that they are a cursed people, destined by a just providence to be the victims and abode of every unworthy motive!—without any noble traits of character to

recommend them?—totally devoid of those moral principles which make the harmony of life? I will appeal even to their oppressors, and they will attest the many cases of faithfulness, of honesty, of humanity, aye, of gratitude, which prove them ruled by the same passions as ourselves.

I will now take the whole range of history, even before the light of glorious Revelation had eneroached upon the darkness of the pagan world, and I defy any one who holds this doctrine of the murderous effects of Immediate Emancipation, to prove, that judging the future by the past, they have any sufficient testimony to the soundness of their belief. History brings not even the shadow of a shade to support them; but strong in presumption, and self conceit, they cling to a theory devoid of reason, and judge of the bad conduct of an emancipated people in the future, in direct opposition to all the testimony of the past. I trust, then, that the fallacy of this belief has been shown in some degree, at least, in theory. But we do not ask your support to the principles of Immediate Emancipation, even upon the plainest theoretical proof; we wish your conviction upon no other ground than the testimony of that which has now become history. And if the past, if Experience stamps theory with the signet of Truth, *he* must indeed be so closely wedded as to be part and parcel of Falsehood, who would support her in defiance of reason and conviction.

When Great Britain abolished slavery in her West India islands, there were two plans offered for the acceptance of her colonies. One was, what is commonly denominated the apprenticeship system; by which the liberated slaves were bound to serve their masters without compensation for a term of six years. The other was the system of Immediate Emancipation, by which the slaves were to be immediately released from all superintendence of the master, but subject, as him, to the laws of the land. The first mentioned system which partakes in some degree of the principles of gradual emancipation, found favor with the principal islands. As regards its operations, I would observe, that though not what

we would have wished, it yet sufficiently and plainly proves, that either gradual, or any other mode of abolition, is far, very far, preferable to Slavery. But the legislatures of the Islands of Antigua and Bermuda, being swayed by wiser or more disinterested counsels, adopted the latter system, that of Immediate Emancipation. But in order to show fully the danger, as some would term it, of this rash proceeding, it will be necessary to understand the true condition of these islands. The proportion that the blacks bear to the whites in the island of Antigua is fifteen to one. Now, applying the theory of our colonization friends, it should have been the first business of the liberated slaves to fall immediately to work, and murder all the white inhabitants. I know that some will say that this does not follow as a matter of course; that there is no general rule without an exception, and that perhaps the reason that the blacks behaved so well, and did not do all these cruel things, was, that they were satisfied with having the power to destroy, and therefore did not exercise it. I see only one reason why such an excuse should not be offered. It is certainly quite as reasonable as most of their other arguments. The reason why such an excuse could not be offered is, that in the island of Bermuda the numbers of the two classes are nearly equal. And we find, by examining the accounts from this island as well as from Antigua, that there has not been a single instance of rioting or other disorderly conduct. Thirty thousand slaves laid down in their rude beds on the night of the last day of July, 1834; and on the morning of the next day, rose up in all the newness of life. What did they do? How did they employ that first day that they could call their own?—when the chains of servitude were struck from the limbs of active manhood, and bowed and hoary headed age walked erect in pride? They assembled in their churches, and poured forth the solemn peals of thanksgiving to him who had thus touched the hearts of their masters with the spirit of the “meek and lowly Jesus.” I can imagine nothing which partakes more than this of the true grandeur of the Moral Sublime. Oh! what a glorious spec-

tacle! Not assembling with the wine cup at the festive board, as the manners of too many of their white brethren would have taught them; but spontaneously uniting, in offering up and ascribing thanks to him, the great Author of every good and every perfect gift. And is this the people of whom it was foretold, that the last day of their slavery would be the first of a long era of licentiousness?—that their freedom’s birthday would be celebrated with the violence of the destroyer?—that misery, and massacre, and Bloodshed, would reign triumphant throughout that long morn; and the light of burning habitations illuminate the dark deeds of that fatal night?—who could not enjoy Liberty—who could not feel gratitude—who were ignoble both in thought, in word, and in action? Ah! well have they answered the calumny; they have hurled back falsehood, and rebuked it with the spirit of Truth. They now point to their conduct as ample evidence of their claim to be considered members of the great family of civilized and enlightened man. It is an established axiom, that “like causes produce like effects.” If then the immediate emancipation of the slaves has produced such beneficial results in these two islands, and in every place where it has been tried; if, by this means, slavery has been abolished with all safety to the master and to the community at large? what sense is there in the cry of those who, too bigoted to yield to that which they cannot answer, respond to every appeal, “*incendiary and traitor*,” as if men were to be convinced that they were doing wrong by branding them with every ignominious epithet. I say again, are abolitionists incendiaries, for calling and urging upon their own countrymen to adopt this means, which is wise in theory and which experience so fully confirms? When we consider the evidence adduced in its support, I cannot conceive how there can remain a doubt in the mind of any one who sincerely desires the welfare of this republic, but that it is the best mode to free our land from the ravages of that monster vice which is now preying upon the vitals of Morality, Virtue, and Religion. What would be

thought of him, who, when the pestilence was hugging the land in its cold embrace, should pray that it might be gradually removed; as if its presence was a blessing instead of a curse? And what would you think of him who should wish for the gradual suppression of any other, or all sins, from the fear that mischief might ensue if men became too suddenly perfect? You would have the same pity for him, if he was really conscientious in the wish, and the same feelings of contempt, if he wished it from cruelty or misanthropic hate, as we have of respect towards the deluded believers in Colonization, who think it a remedy for slavery, and of contempt for those, who, supporters of this "patriarchal system," advocate it as the safety-valve of the South, through which the honest Anti-Slavery feeling of the country may find a vent, without blowing their beloved system to pieces.

In the consideration of this subject, I have not alluded to any detailed accounts of individual suffering, resulting from the cruelty of hard-hearted masters. This might possibly be remedied. But I oppose the system, as a system. I can see some little justice in the arguments of those who contend that we should not allow these particular cases to influence us in the least. But I will comment upon those crimes against humanity, which are its natural, and inevitable fruits: in short, which are legalized by Law. We have not only a right, but we are bound in opposing Slavery, to hold up to public view the means by which it is supported, and without which it could not exist. For he who says that slavery could be sustained without these cruel Laws, goes at once further than we do, and charges them with *unnecessary* cruelty. We will protest, then, against the barbarity of that law, which keeps millions, generation after generation, in the grossest ignorance; which violates the marriage contract; which allows the division of families; which separates father from mother, parent from child, brother from sister; which places man hardly above the brute creation in intellect, and shuts out from his bosom those glorious aspirations after the future, which can soften the woes of

the present. Who has not felt moments when it seemed as if darkness had taken possession of his soul, that Hope, that beacon light, had swept away the clouds as with the bright beams of a morning Sun?

Education and Liberty may bring many sorrows; they may open new sources of vexation and care; you may not lie down after your daily toil with the knowledge that as the master takes care of his cattle, he will also provide you with food, with shelter, and with clothing: but he indeed deserves that the dull, cold clank of the chain should sound unceasingly in his ear, who after living the life of education and Freedom could lie down in the dull death of Slavery and ignorance. Divest Slavery of all unnecessary cruelty; strip it of every other odious feature but that ignorance upon which it is based; yet in the eloquent language of a late writer—"It is a bitter, bitter cup, from which the understanding and the heart of every man, in whom nature works unsophisticated and unbiassed—recoils with unutterable aversion and abhorrence."

But though I speak thus: far be it from me, and I hope from any abolitionist, to denounce them on this account as universal sinners. I do most decidedly condemn any approach to that spirit, which would rail out against them as if they had committed the unpardonable offence. I cannot but believe, that there are as many good, and just, and virtuous men in other respects, amongst them, as there are amongst us. I believe that there are many, yea a great majority, who wish slavery abolished: and that it is from want of knowledge and not from inclination, that it has not been abolished before this. It is right that vice should be opposed; but here comes an important distinction. You are doing your duty in *opposing* Immorality; but you are assuming an office which no purity of life can warrant, in *judging* those who are guilty of this Immorality. To condemn *that*, which you sincerely believe to be wrong, is your duty: but to sit in judgment upon your brother is an offence against the majesty of Heaven.

I think that there are many sins amongst us nearly equal in enormity to

slaveholding. If then any one should ask why we meddle with slavery if this is the case: why we concern ourselves about the sins of our neighbors when there are any lying at our own doors?—Here is our answer. In the first place—We are concerned in it as a people if not as individuals; and the discussion of Slavery at one place where *we have* control over its existence, naturally leads to the discussion of Slavery in the South, which as I have already shown, also affects us. Again: Though there may be other sins even equal to slaveholding, there are very few, if any, which lead to such bad consequences. We oppose other sins principally for their effects upon the happiness of the individuals who commit them; but when we censure this, we censure it not only for the sake of the master, but for its results upon millions who are not responsible for his guilt. For instance, though the first slaveholders in this country are no more to be blamed than those of the present day, yet, the consequence of their crime has been the entailment of this sin upon every succeeding generation. If at the first settlement of Virginia half of the colonists had conspired and murdered the other half; though every one would consider that a sin of much deeper dye, than the enslaving of their fellow men, yet at the present day we might not feel the effects of such an act in the least. We also oppose it for the sake of the slave. If we see a man without family, who had been deprived by death of those relatives which would naturally be interested in him—becoming intemperate; we might remonstrate with him and then, if he would not reform, we would most likely leave him to do as he chose. But if we see an individual, surrounded by a large family enjoying the happiness of the domestic fireside; if we know that his family are dependent upon him for education, and an aged parent leaning upon him for support: if we find him day after day verging towards that condition which will mar the happiness of so many; which will plunge his children in misery and want, and leave that aged mother to experience the cold charity of an unthinking world: if more than this, we know that by his act, the same cause

of sorrow will be fastened upon his posterity, rivetting thus to their very existence, bitterness and crime:—under such circumstances who could believe his duty done, in once coldly expostulating with him? Would you not, every time that you looked upon his family, feel fresh impulse, that he might be reclaimed from the error of his ways; and that not only for his own sake, but for the sake of those so entirely dependent upon him. Yet he would be no more of a drunkard, than the first instance which I have supposed. This then is the case with us, in our opposition to slavery. Though we might be tempted when met with rebuff and abuse, to cease urging where we experienced in return only bitter, biting scorn: yet when we look upon the millions of those who are the victims of this degrading bondage, and foresee that dread inheritance of sin to millions yet unborn, we experience the same feelings with him, who looking upon the children and wife of the Drunkard, feels new energy in remonstrance, even for the sake of these;—that he may plead for them which are dumb.

It may be proper upon this occasion to state a few of the reasons which prompted us to the formation of a “Junior Anti-Slavery Society.” I know that there are some who will object that as we have not arrived at the legal age of manhood, we have no right to form such a society. If the objector be one of those who encourage “Youth’s Bible and Tract Societies,” I answer that our object is at least equally important. If their purpose be to supply the poor with the scriptures, our object in part is, to make those read who have the book already open before them. For it looks rather inconsistent, to circulate the Bible among the poor and the Heathen, while we live in the open violation of its purest maxims and precepts. The law prescribes the age of twenty-one as the beginning of manhood. But the age of moral duty commences with the attainment of reason. How foolish would appear the assertion that as a man could not serve as senator until the age of Thirty, that all under that age should not express any opinion upon their conduct. As the law, while it allows no man under a certain

age to be President, does not prohibit younger men from censuring their opinions and practice: neither is there any law denying to those under the age of 21 the privilege of expressing *their* opinions, and striving to influence the judgment of *their* seniors. Therefore if this was entirely and exclusively a *political* evil, we would have a right to form societies, to publish and express our opinions upon the subject: how much more then is it our duty, to do all we can for the cure of a moral evil. Moral, and even legal responsibility to a certain degree, exists, as soon as the individual attains the knowledge of right and wrong. It is no reason for being uncharitable, that we have not arrived at Manhood. I never saw that passage in the scriptures, which says; "All those *over* 21 must feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and do unto others as they would that others should do unto them; but as for the youngsters, it's no matter what they do."

When we are told to feed the hungry, is it not intended that we should exercise some judgment in the giving of Alms? Every command supposes the exercise of a reasoning power in the person to whom it is addressed. Let it not be said, that our exertions will do no good; such a doctrine has been exploded since the time that the widow's mite was declared worth all the rest of the offering. Then, if we know that many in this land are suffering under a cruel yoke, and feel an inclination to give even our mite in his behalf, who is there that can take it upon himself to condemn us for the act? Then the question becomes—Have we sufficient intelligence to judge upon any moral subject? If we have not; there cannot any bad consequences ensue. Mischief may arise from a perversion of judgment; but never from a total want of it. If we are incapable of a due consideration of this subject, what harm can result from infants prattling foolishness together: and even if they should take the pennies that would be otherwise spent in horse-cake and candy, and put them into the treasury of the vilest society in existence, it would be no sin, for where there is no law there can be no transgression: and if we are capable, as some of our kind friends tell us, then as we have the law

we are bound to obey its dictates. For, if any one believe any act to be wrong, and yet proclaim not his disapprobation, but thereby encourage its committers in the deed, he is as guilty, if not more guilty than they.

To you, then, my young companions, who thus early have united to do your little in this cause, and bear evidence, that in manhood you will not shun the acknowledgment of your principles—be encouraged. When you shall falter in your course, think of him, who but lately the life and soul of the good work, has gone down to his rest, and the tears of a people have watered the flowers which grow on his grave. Think of him, who was always ready, at all times and seasons, to succor the oppressed. His was not the enthusiasm of a moment, fading away like the smile on the cheek of sorrow; it was the enthusiasm of a life.

"Gone to thy heavenly Father's rest,

The flowers of Eden round thee blowing;
And on thy ears the murmurs blest
Of Shiloah's waters gently flowing.
Beneath that spreading tree which gives
To all the earth its healing leaves,
In the white robe of Angels clad—
And wandering by that sacred river,
Whose streams of holiness make glad
The city of our God forever."

Let such be our example, and we must triumph. The course is onward. The evidence of the truth of our principles is abroad in the land. It is not in the whirlwind, as it rushes along the mountain side, uprooting the strong oak of an hundred years; it is not in the storm, as it strips off the green leaves of the summer, and pours down a second deluge upon the parched earth; it is not in the thunder, that peals its witness of these, these great effects of one great Cause; it is not in the bright flashes of the lightning, which pierce the dark expanse of heaven, like the reflection of the sword of the Cherubim, which turned in every direction to keep the way of the Tree of Life: but it is in "the still small voice," which convinces the understanding, which touches the heart as with a "live coal from the Altar."

